WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

A N N U A L

R E P O R T

of

the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for

the year

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MITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT of the MEDICAL OFFICER of HEALTH

for the Year 1913.

Mr Chairman, Lady & Gentlemen,

I have much pleasure in presenting for your consideration my Annual Report on the Health and the Sanitary Administration of your District for the yeat 1913, together with the vital statistics and tables attached.

I am glad to state that so far as the prevalence of Infectious Diseases is concerned it compares very favourably with the previous year. I am able to report a rise in the Birth Rate, and the smallest infantile death rate I have any record of, also a considerable drop in the death-rate.

POPULATION.

During the year no appreciable change has taken place in the number of inhabitants since my last report. I have estimated the population at 3,410. Since the year 1900 there has been a steady falling off in the rate of increase of population which obtained prior to that date. Had the old annual rise been maintained since that year the population should have reached the figure 4,500 for this year.

HOUSING and TOWN PLANNING.

At present there are about 770 inhabited houses under your care, giving an average of 4.4 persons to each house. The supply of good dwelling houses is not yet equal to the needs of the District. Housing conditions are on the whole fairly good.

I should like again to urge you to insist on having all new houses built with the water borne system of sewerage. I pointed out last year the high prevalence of Rheumatic

conditions. and consequent heart disease, in this district. and the advantage in such cases of having a Bath in each house with a supply of hot water.

The supervision over the erection of all new property is good owing to the appointment of a new Sanitary Inspector during the year. and in the absence of a report by his predecessor I am not able to give figures as to the number of houses visited during the year, or what defects have been remedied at his suggestion.

You have appointed your Sanitary Inspector part time officer to continue the special inspection of houses under the Housing and Town Planning Act. and to keep the records stipulated by Article II of that Act.

Although the Housing and Town Planning Act has been adopted by you for your District. its adoption has not yet been sanctioned by the Local Government Board, and I cannot advise you to apply for its adoption till the necessary officials have been appointed by you for the full administration of the Act.

The procedure for the inspection of the District has already been determined, and the necessary books and forms &c. for keeping the records are being used.

Last year I gave an account of the amount of visiting and inspecting of houses that had been carried out. I gave an outline of the nature of the work.since when no house has been found altogether unfit for human habitation.

Some few houses have no back door, and no yard accommodation, but in the majority of cases even where the property is very old the houses inside are kept wonderfully clean.

I should like again to point out that it is within your powers under this Act, and without further sanction, to make such changes as you think justifiable, in any property which does not conform to the general plan of the immediate vicinity.

No action has yet been taken under the Housing of the Working Classes Acts 1890 to 1908.

BIRTHS.

I am glad to be able to report an improvement in this rate on that of last year.

During the year 73 births were notified - 33 boys and 40 girls, giving a birth-rate of 21.47; exactly the same figure as the average for the past ten years.

I should like again to point out that you can through the provision of suitable attractive dwellings for young couples at marriageable ages, exercise through the marriage rate, some influence on the birth-rate for a district like yours. There were no illegitimate births.

DEATHS.

It is very gratifying to be able to report a continued steady fall in this rate. Notwithstanding the fact that in three or four cases of death shortly after the persons had taken up their abode in your district, only 34 deaths have been registered - 16 males and 18 females; giving a death-rate of 9.97, compared with an average of 13.13 for the past ten years.

The commonest cause of death was Heart Disease with ten cases, Senility with seven cases, Cirrhosis of the Liver, Pneumonia, other ~~dien~~ diseases of the Chest, three each; Cancer and Consumption, two each; Scarlet Fever, one; Tubercular Meningitis, one; Appendicitis and Haemorrhage on the Brain, one.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

It is also very gratifying to be able to report the lowest Infantile death-rate on record. Prior to 1909 the average rate never fell below 100 per thousand births; in the year 1901 it stood at 185.3. Since 1909 the average has been 78. This year the rate is only 13.6.

This figure is too low to draw any conclusions from it by itself, but the steady decline in this rate for the past six years shows that the better understanding of the needs and requirements of early infant life is beginning to tell, and this year, at any rate, the drop in this rate has left us at the new year with more children under one year of age than other years when we had fourteen more births during the year.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The outbreak of Scarlet Fever which lasted throughout last year and the early part of this year, has now practically died out, so that one may reasonably assert that we have now entered on a period of immunity, or comparative immunity, for a cycle of three or, I sincerely hope, six years, as we experienced from 1906 to 1911.

There were three cases of Erysipelas, three of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, and 33 of Scarlet Fever. Nearly all the cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital, where one, a very delicate child, which on previous occasions had suffered from Rheumatic Fever, died after an attack of Pneumonia following an abscess in the throat.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL.

The Hospital has been closed on several occasions, and opened again for a few cases at a time.

Since the end of August we have not had more than two cases in Hospital at any given time.

I understand that the Building itself and the Disinfector at the Hospital are engaging some attention at present, and I will not now add anything to what I have said on this subject at various times during the year.

SCHOOLS.

BUILDINGS.

I am able to report favourably on all the School Buildings in the District.

Owing to the presence of Scarlet Fever among the pupils attending the School it was thought necessary to disinfect the Schools at different times as opportunity offered. I would again respectfully ask you to procure authority for your Sanitary Inspector to disinfect all the School Buildings at least twice a year during the long vacations.

ATTENDANCE.

It has been necessary to resort to closure in the case of some schools for Scarlet Fever.

MEDICAL INSPECTION.

The children attending the Schools have been medically examined in accordance with the requirements laid down by the Board of Education, but the statistics for your area are not made out separately.

SEWERAGE.

The system of works laid down for the sewage disposal is giving satisfaction, and I hope the work of conversion from the pail closet to the water borne system of sewage will receive a much needed stimulus.

There are 68 privy middens, 557 pail closets, 50 waste water closets, and 146 fresh water closets.

The sewage from the privy middens and the pail closets is sold or given to the farmers for agricultural purposes.

SCAVENGING.

This work is well done by the Council under the supervision of the Surveyor.

A Dust Destructor has not yet been provided.

DRAINAGE.

The general character of the Drainage is good. Steps have been taken to remedy several sources of pollution of streams.

ROADS.

The streets are well kept and lighted. I am sorry to have to report that the condition of the roads is not so good as heretofore.

WATER SUPPLY.

This is always good and plentiful.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

Last year I pointed out the advisability of building a Public Abbatoir, with a loose box attached, and a suitable room to hang meat in. There are at present three private slaughter houses in the district. All are on the register and are regularly visited by the Meat Inspector. There has not, during the year, been found any meat unfit for human consumption.

COWSHEDS and PIGGERIES.

I have nothing new to report under this head.

BAKERIES, FISH & CHIP SHOPS.

These are always kept in excellent condition.

FACTORIES & WORKSHOPS.

These have been visited and there is nothing new to report.

NUISANCES.

No legal proceedings have been necessary during the year.

DAIRIES and MILK SHOPS.

There has been no milk found not to come up to the standard of quality required by the regulations.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.